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Volume 2

Issue 5

May 1975

Verbal Categories of some Northwest Semitic Languages:

A Didactic Approach

by

S. Segert



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*This paper is part of the
Proceedings
of the
First North-American Conference on Semitic Linguistics
Santa Barbara, California
March 24-25, 1973*

**VERBAL CATEGORIES OF SOME NORTHWEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES:
A DIDACTIC APPROACH**

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Terminology and concepts based on traditional (Greek/Latin; Arabic/Hebrew) grammars are not always satisfactory, but some modern linguistic approaches are not suitable if they need too much preliminary explanation. Terms and concepts presented here for discussion include lexical categories, manners of action (*Aktionsart*), factitive, functions of perfect and imperfect, aspects, accomplished/unaccomplished action, tense.

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0. THEORETICAL AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

In the last century, the author of a grammar or a dictionary could easily draw upon a store of traditional terminology based ultimately on the work of ancient Greek and Latin grammarians. For the Semitic languages some specific concepts could also be expressed with the help of terms developed by mediaeval Arabic and Hebrew grammarians. Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, the rather monolithic historical comparative method, then commonly used in linguistics, provided a solid and uniform frame of reference for applied linguistics.

The development of various structural and other schools of linguistic thought has resulted to some extent in a tension between theoretical and applied linguistics. Representatives of the newer trends have rightly pointed to the advantages their methods could provide for the teaching of language. In the first half of the twentieth century much attention was devoted to linguistic phenomena which could be studied in isolation without any specific--one might perhaps say philological--acquaintance with actual texts and other primary sources. Some recent linguistic theories, however, have placed increasing emphasis on syntax and semantics and may be more helpful in the area of applied linguistics.

Some valuable terms and concepts require an elaborate explanation of one or another basic approach to the problem of language before they can be put to practical use, but recent linguistic theory has developed other ideas and modes of expression that can profitably be included in an elementary grammar, even though the general manner of presentation is still basically traditional.

The purpose of a grammar, especially an elementary one, always remains the presentation of the phenomena of a language in a way that is understandable to its users, without requiring any previous knowledge of some specific linguistic method. The analysis of a given language in accordance with principles developed by some particular school of linguistic thought is an entirely different task.

For works in the area of applied linguistics, such as grammars, especially on an elementary level, the author now has at his disposal many concepts and terms, both traditional and modern. If he chooses those items best suited to express the phenomena of a given language, he should not be criticized for eclecticism. He may freely select any mode of expression that describes clearly the character of an individual phenomenon, as well as its function and its position in the structure of the language.¹

1. TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Discussions about terminology have often been considered unfruitful or even misleading, since the substance of the matter under discussion was sometimes veiled by the complexities of a technical vocabulary. Linguistic ideas about unity of form and content are valid for

¹Bibliographical notes are limited to a few specific references. For general information and bibliographical data see Sebeok:1970, esp. the contributions by Gene M. Schramm, Edward Ullendorff, Erica Reiner, Chaim Rabin and Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, 257-412.

terminology as well. Precisely defined terms are helpful in so far as they describe real concepts and categories that exist in a given language.

While the theoretical linguist enjoys great freedom in introducing new terms and even re-defining some old ones, in applied linguistics it is necessary to use commonly accepted terms as far as possible. A substantial reinterpretation of the old terms can be misleading. Both traditional terms and items taken over from the vocabulary of a particular linguistic school must be accepted without major changes. They may be defined more exactly in order to express the characteristic features of some particular language, but their basic meaning should be preserved.

1.1. Terminology in Grammars of the Older Northwest Semitic Languages

In most grammars of the West Semitic languages the terminology is based primarily on Greek and Latin categories, with some admixture of Arabic and Hebrew concepts. The only East Semitic language, Akkadian, has, of course, no uninterrupted indigenous grammatical tradition, and new terminology developed by Assyriologists has been kept more in line with recent linguistic trends. For the teaching of living Semitic languages some of the methods and also the terminology of various modern linguistic schools have been successfully employed.

In dealing with those Northwest Semitic languages which are no longer in every-day use, methods of linguistic study have remained much more traditional than those applied to the dead language, Akkadian, on the one hand, or to the living Semitic languages on the other. This situation is perpetuated by the fact that the older Northwest Semitic languages are usually learned for the purpose of interpreting texts from the Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and attention has been focused primarily on the content of such texts rather than on their linguistic form.

The author of an elementary grammar has to reckon with the situation as it exists today. His presentation should be kept free from unnecessary difficulties that might result from introducing too many non-traditional concepts and terms. The pedagogical or didactic approach--in the broadest sense of the words--often is to be preferred over that of the theoretical linguist. But no relevant linguistic observation or statement should be obscured by the deliberate omission of a more precise concept or term merely for the sake of a pretended simplicity.

The following observations are based on practical experience in the preparation of two grammars, one for Phoenician and Punic, the other for Syriac. These languages may properly be regarded as the most characteristic representatives of the two main branches of the Northwest Semitic group, Canaanite and Aramaic.

A relatively small corpus of texts, scattered over fifteen centuries and around the entire Mediterranean basin, with the orthography of the more important inscriptions strictly consonantal, explains many gaps in our knowledge of Phoenician.

The Syriac language, on the other hand, is represented by a very large number of literary texts supplemented by a limited amount of epigraphic and other non-literary evidence. Considering the quantity of material available, it is no exaggeration to say that Syriac is the most neglected of the major Semitic languages. With very few exceptions, work done in this century has been based on a grammar published by Theodor Nöldeke in 1898.

The situation with regard to these two languages, neither of which is any longer spoken, makes the use of any generative method difficult, if not impossible. For Phoenician, the material is too restricted to allow one to distinguish possible forms and constructions from other realizations that may be impossible. The sources for Syriac would indeed be sufficient to allow a treatment along the lines of generative grammar--but only after a vast corpus of material had been properly analyzed. Thus, for both books, it is preferable to use a recognitive approach that is in many respects closer to traditional grammar in its concepts and terminology.

2. CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL CHARACTER

2.1. Lexical Versus Inflectional Categories

In a grammar of one of the Semitic languages it is usual to present the opposition of characteristic vowels before the third root consonant of perfect and imperfect verb forms, which conveys semantic information, in a section devoted to morphology. But the so-called characteristic vowel belongs to the base of the verb; it is not the result of changes caused by inflection. Therefore, this phenomenon may more appropriately be treated in a section devoted to the formation of words than in a chapter on morphology.

Similarly, verbal aspect, durative or punctual, is bound in principle to the meaning of a verb and not to its form. The same morphological category can have different functions depending on whether the verb itself is durative or punctual. It is of interest to note, however, that in some weak verbs aspect is indicated by the weak root consonant used.

2.2. The System of Characteristic Vowels: Active and Stative Verbs

The system of so-called characteristic vowels is not so clearly visible in either Phoenician or Syriac as in some of the other Semitic languages, due to a lack of reliable information concerning Phoenician, and to phonetic changes and the operation of analogy in Syriac. But the differentiation of the vowels, which is much better preserved in Arabic and Hebrew, must still be recognized as a basic feature of the verbal system.

The usual terms, "active" and "stative," express the character of Semitic verbs better than "transitive" and "intransitive." A slight inconvenience arises from the fact that the word "active" is also used for the active voice, but it does not seem necessary to introduce any new term, such as "verb of action," "progressive" or "non-progressive."

Active verbs with their characteristic vowels, *a in the perfect and *u in the imperfect; stative verbs, denoting temporary quality with the vowels *i and *a or permanent quality with the vowels *u and *a --or their modifications--all these may simply be indicated in the lexicon of the language.

2.3. Verbs with Inherent Aspect

Although the phenomenon of inherent aspect will require further investigation in both Phoenician and Syriac, it may still be appropriate to mention it here.

A perceptive study by H.B. Rosén (1961) of two kinds of verbs, based on Biblical Aramaic evidence from the Book of Daniel (cf. Kutscher 1970:378-379), indicates that while verbs with punctual aspect do not differ in morphology from verbs with linear aspect, similar forms have different functions. Using as examples /n-p-l/ 'to fall', a verb with punctual aspect, and /d-w-r/ 'to dwell', a verb with linear aspect, the following relationship was postulated: the imperfect of the linear aspect verb has a narrative-constative function, while the imperfect of the punctual aspect verb conveys a future or volitive meaning. On the other hand, the narrative-constative of a punctual aspect verb is indicated by the present active participle, while the future-volitive of a linear aspect verb has to be expressed by the participle, preceded by the imperfect of the verb 'to be'.

2.4. Types of Weak Verbs Indicating Aspect

The observations of Benno Landsberger on this subject, published as early as 1926, can be applied to both Phoenician and Syriac. A particular aspect is frequently expressed by a certain type of weak verb, but any one of these types may also express some other aspect (cf. Moscati 1964:168-169).

Only a few examples will be given. Among these, the so-called "chain-durative" aspect, representing a continuing series of individual actions seems to be the most distinctive. It is indicated by verbs with a geminated second root consonant, such as the Syriac /b-z-z/ 'to plunder'.

Other durative verbs, belonging to a class with *y* or *w* as the third root consonant, occur in both Phoenician and Syriac, e.g. /h-z-y/ 'to see' and (*m-n-w >) /m-n-y/ 'to count'; however, verbs with *y* may be also terminative, like /b-n-y/ 'to build'. Verbs with the weak middle root consonant *w* often indicate a change or transition, e.g. /q-w-m/ 'to get up', /m-w-t/ 'to die', while those with *y* may express an outcome or result, such as the root *š-y-m 'to place, fix' which is realized in Phoenician as /š-y-m/ and in Syriac as /s-y-m/.

3. VERBAL PATTERNS AND THEIR ELEMENTS

3.1. The Term

The term "verbal pattern" may be used to designate sets of forms derived from one root and having a distinctive meaning--as indicated in the dictionaries.

"Verbal pattern" is analogous to the widely accepted "nominal pattern" (called also "theme," or in French following Jean Cantineau (1950), "SCHEMA"). Both nominal and verbal patterns appear when actual words are formed from theoretical roots, which may be regarded as non-continuous morphemes.

The term "verbal pattern" would seem to be more appropriate than any of the other designations now in general use--such as "stem," which does not ordinarily indicate a complete word, or "conjugation," which is not appropriate for different sets of forms derived from one root, or "form," which is too general (cf. Segert 1965a:5-6).

The traditional manner of indicating individual patterns by nominal or verbal forms of a paradigm verb such as /p-ʿ-l/, going back to mediaeval Arabic grammar--or /q-ṭ-l/ is very convenient, since it shows clearly the morphological structure of any particular realization.

3.2. Systems of Patterns

3.2.1. THE SYSTEMS

Among verbal patterns² the following morphological features are encountered: the change of vowels between root consonants, doubling of the middle root consonant, and addition of one or two prefixes. The occurrence of an infix after the first root consonant is very rare.

It is quite reasonable to suppose that each one of these morphemes had semantic function. While the indication of patterns by paradigm forms might be adequate purely from the viewpoint of morphology, it is also necessary to establish the function of the morphemes, since their distribution is conditioned by two different functional categories; namely, voice and manner of action (cf. Segert 1965a:7).

Every pattern has its proper place within both categories, standing, as it were, at a point of intersection--for example the 'Apʿel is Syriac is active with respect to voice and causative in its manner of action.

From the following schematic chart it is quite clear that the system of verbal patterns in Phoenician is rather asymmetric--due to the inclusion of elements of different origin within the system--while the Syriac array shows a remarkable symmetry.

²The system of Old Babylonian verbal patterns was presented by Edzard:1965.

	PHOENICIAN			SYRIAC		
	active	internal passive	reflexive and reciprocal	active	reflexive-passive	internal passive
simple	Qal	passive Qal(?)	Nip [°] al; forms with -t- infix in Old Byblian	P([°]) [°] al	'Etp([°]) [°] e1	part./q([°])ṭīl/
D-form = factitive	Pi [°] e1	Pu [°] al	Hitpa [°] e1	Pa([°]) [°] e1	'Etpa([°]) [°] al	part./m([°])qa(ṭ)tal/
causative	Yip [°] il	Yup [°] al		'Aṗ [°] e1	'E(t)taṗ [°] al	part./maṭal/

It can readily be seen that the causative prefixes /y-/ in Phoenician and /'-/ in Syriac belong to a category different from the reflexive prefix /t-/.

The prefixes /t-/ and /n-/ as well as the vowels of the internal passive indicate voice. The opposition of simple forms vs. forms with a doubled middle root consonant--called also D-forms--and forms with a causative prefix is not so easy to characterize. The most convenient term would seem to be "manner of action."

3.2.2. VOICE

The active voice has no marker.

The internal passive is indicated by a change of vowel. The marker of internal passive in Phoenician is /u/, which is presumably short in finite forms of the patterns Pu[°]al and Yup[°]al.

Passive participles, morphologically related to the active patterns, have in simple patterns a long vowel between second and third root consonants, /ū/ in Phoenician, /ī/ in Syriac (see below, 7).

In Syriac passive participles of the derived patterns there is an opposition of /a/ before the last root consonant to the /e/ (< *i) of the active participle.

The decline--in Phoenician--and the total loss--in Syriac--of finite forms of the internal passive led to the use of originally reflexive forms to express the passive voice. Syriac developed a complete set of reflexive patterns corresponding to the active patterns, not only for its three frequent patterns, but also for other rare patterns with the causative prefixes /ša-/ and /sa-/. In Phoenician, forms with the reflexive prefix /t-/ are very rare, and those with a reflexive infix /-t-/ are limited to an archaic inscription on the sarcophagus of king 'Aḫirom of Byblos from about 1000 B.C.

In the Phoenician system an originally reciprocal pattern with the prefix /n-/ belonged formerly to some category other than that of voice. This morpheme was integrated into the system as a replacement for the normal form of the passive in verbal patterns expressing the simple manner of action.

3.2.3. MANNER OF ACTION

The term "simple" and the term "D-form," for the patterns with a doubled middle consonant, are convenient, in so far as they indicate morphological structure.

The designation "causative," which is of course functional, comprehends patterns with different prefixes in different languages. The word "simple" is clear and appropriate from both a morphological and a functional or semantic view-point. The choice of an expression to convey accurately the meaning of forms with a doubled middle root consonant is more problematical and will be discussed later. The term for the entire category, "manner of action," is intended to be a translation of the German AKTIONSART, which had been rendered in French *ESPÈCE D'ACTION*. The English word "manner" seems more appropriate than the rather general word "kind" or than "mode" which is too close to "mood," the equivalent of the Latin *MODUS*.

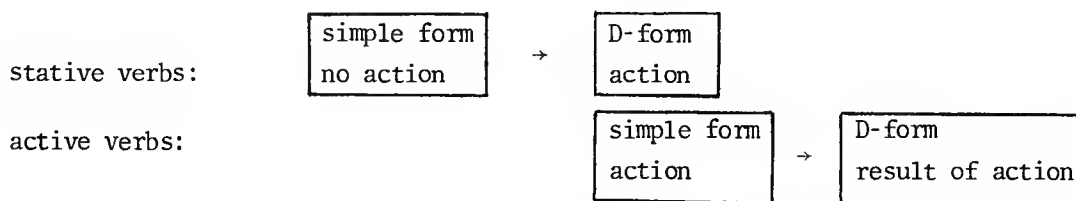
The essential characteristics of various manners of action, such as simple, causative, or factitive, correspond quite well to the usual conception of AKTIONSART (cf. Ammer 1958:172-174). But among other phenomena so characterized, it is usual also to cite "accomplished" and "non-accomplished," which in the Semitic languages are expressed by quite different means and belong therefore to a separate category. The Semitic formal characteristics must be accepted as relevant for distinguishing the category "manner of action" from that of "aspect."

3.2.3.1. The Patterns with a Doubled Middle Root Consonant - Factitive

The traditional term for the D-forms is "intensive"; it expresses the character of some of these forms, but not all of them. From a thorough study of the Hebrew *Pi'el*, Ernst Jenni (1968:275-276) concluded that this form is either factitive, if derived from nouns or stative (neutric) verbs, or resultative, if derived from active verbs.

This proposition is valid also for Syriac; e.g. the active verb /q(°)tal/ 'to kill, slay', D-form: /qa(ṭ)tel/ 'to kill (many)', 'to have put to death'--resultative; the stative verb /d(°)ek/ 'to go out (fire)', D-form /da(°)ek/ 'to extinguish'--factitive.

It is preferable to have one term which will cover both types of change. Clearly this form expresses more action in both the instances. The following scheme may be observed:



The direction is the same for both the types of verbs; therefore the term "factitive" seems appropriate since it indicates both more action and the result of action; cf. the Latin past participle *factum*.

4. TENSES - PERFECT AND IMPERFECT

4.1. Tenses in Phoenician and Syriac - Past and Non-Past

The most difficult problem in the general area of Semitic verbal categories is not so acute for Phoenician and Syriac, since in these languages both the perfect and imperfect function mostly as tenses, while their older character as aspects can be observed only in a limited number of instances.

The basic opposition between the functions of the perfect and the imperfect in both Phoenician and Syriac can be characterized as "past" versus "non-past." Traditional terminology is quite compatible with this conception, if we take "perfect" as a typical representative of a past

tense (which is, of course, valid for Latin and most European languages, though not for English or Greek). "Imperfect" may then be understood as a broad term for non-past, i.e. present and future.

The development of a periphrastic present in Syriac brings an additional factor into play which limits the actual use of the imperfect, but the change is not substantial. The consecutive perfect and imperfect in Phoenician are fully integrated into the system of tenses.

4.1.1. THE PERIPHRASTIC PRESENT IN SYRIAC

The combination of the active participle and a closely attached personal pronoun of the first or second person, e.g. /kātēb ('e)nā/ 'I am writing', /kātābā(n 'a(n))tēn/ 'you (fem. pl.) are writing', yields a periphrastic present which is comparable to the English combination of a participle with an appropriate form of the verb 'to be'. For the third person the participle can be used as a predicate.

The availability of these expressions has reduced substantially the use of the imperfect. In most of the instances the Syriac imperfect has the function of a future tense, but this usage is not so exclusive that one may simply replace the term "imperfect" by "future" (which was used for the imperfect in some traditional grammars until the middle of the 19th century).

4.1.2. THE CONSECUTIVE IMPERFECT AND CONSECUTIVE PERFECT IN PHOENICIAN

Whatever the origin of the so-called consecutive imperfect may have been, it seems clear that in the Phoenician system of tenses it was fully equalized in function with the perfect. Similarly, the consecutive perfect corresponds to finite verbal forms with prefixes, not only in the indicative imperfect, but also in the jussive.

From among a small number of attested forms of the consecutive perfect the following examples may be cited: *wkn hqrt z... w'm z ... ykn* (Karatepe, KAI 26:A:III:7, 8th cent. B.C.) 'and this city will endure (consecutive perfect) and this people will endure (imperfect)'; *kl khn 'š yqh... wn'nš* (Marseille tariff, KAI 69:20, Punic, about 300 B.C.) 'every priest who will take (imperfect)... <and> will be fined' or 'may be fined' (consecutive perfect with the future or jussive meaning).

The consecutive imperfect is very rare; it may be recognized in a conditional sentence from an inscription on the sarcophagus of king 'Ahirom of Byblos (KAI 1:2, about 1000 B.C.): *w'l mlk ... 'ly ... wygl* 'and if a king...will attack (perfect)... and will uncover (consecutive imperfect functioning like the perfect)....'.

4.2. Other Functions of Perfect and Imperfect

Although the significance of the perfect and imperfect is mainly temporal in both Phoenician and Syriac, other and presumably more original functions of these interrelated forms may now be discussed.

The difference between an earlier and later usage of these forms can be seen quite clearly in Ugaritic (Liverani 1964:187-188). In more recent prose texts from the 13th cent. B.C. the perfect and imperfect are employed in the same way as in Phoenician prose, as tenses for past and non-past. On the other hand, Ugaritic poetry, though not fixed in writing until the 14th cent. B.C., reflects much older traditions and here the quest for specific functions of verbal forms with affixes and prefixes must be pursued within the category of aspect. The same is true for the oldest poetry in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Michel 1960).

The category of aspect, as it is used in Slavic linguistics or in the analysis of the Greek verb, is certainly a helpful one, but there are problems with it even in dealing with these

languages. A major difficulty stems from the close mutual relationship between the categories of aspect and AKTIONSART in the Slavic languages.³

Aspect may properly be regarded as subjective, the choice of different aspects being dependent on the free decision of the speaker. If aspect is characterized either by the inclusion of an action in the flow of time in which the speaker lives, or by its exclusion from that flow (Ammer 1958:167-169), then the subjectivity of such a conception may well be stressed. On the other hand, the distinction between accomplished--perfective--and non-accomplished--imperfective--actions is no longer entirely subjective; and this opposition might fall rather within the category of AKTIONSART.

Turning once again to the Northwest Semitic texts, an attempt may now be made to relate these two conceptions to each other and to the kindred notion of tense. The following tentative explanation of the development of the perfect and imperfect may be proposed.⁴

As the first stage, subjective aspect may be posited. This stage is attested in Ugaritic poetry and in the older poetry of the Hebrew Bible. In the earlier portions of the Old Testament Psalter--late Psalms may be excluded--the perfect tense, according to Diethelm Michel (1960), expresses independent action, while the imperfect serves to denote an action which is related or dependent upon circumstances (cf. Segert 1965b:93-97, 103). This conception of subjective aspect is close to that eventually reached by Carl Brockelmann (1953:90-92; 1956:39): the perfect served to express action seen in its totality, while the imperfect described action as it was going on. The terms "constative" and "cursive" are appropriate for these two functions (cf. Ammer 1958:169).

The function of the perfect and imperfect tenses in the older prose of the Hebrew Bible can be described by the terms "perfective" and "imperfective," denoting accomplished and non-accomplished actions. For such texts this interpretation seems to be more satisfactory than the conception of subjective aspect--which is valid only for the oldest Biblical poetry--or than a temporal interpretation which is more appropriate for later, especially post-exilic Hebrew. Therefore, this function of the perfect and imperfect represent a second stage in the development.

While it might be possible to relate the concept and term "perfective" to a punctual aspect, and "imperfect" to a durative, linear aspect, the very use of the word "aspect" would create a difficulty, since the term has already been appropriately applied to the subjective function of the two corresponding forms in the first stage.⁵ The term AKTIONSART or some English equivalent is also not to be recommended, since this category is indicated by other morphological means in quite a different setting.

If aspect is conceived as subjective, the term and concept must be retained for the first stage. If the word "aspect"--in accordance with its usage in the Indo-European linguistics (cf. Lyons: 313-315)--were applied to the more objective categories of accomplished vs. non-accomplished action, then some other term would have to be found for the subjective conception of the first stage.

The transition from each stage to the next can be explained by similarities of function. An action which can be seen in its entirety is likely to be an accomplished action; accomplished actions usually took place in the past, and thus the perfect became the form used to express

³Cf. Dostál 1954; Koschmieder-Schmid 1967:33, 41-42, 49; Segert 1965b: 101-102.

⁴This proposal was presented in guest lectures at the Universities of Göttingen, Marburg, Munich (in May 1965) and Frankfurt (in December 1965). Very helpful observations were expressed especially by Professors R. Borger, A. Dietrich, H. Donner; O. Rössler, E. Wagner (Giessen); D.-O. Edzard, E. Koschmieder; and R. Sellheim.

⁵Cf. also Rundgren 1961; Segert 1965b:97-100. [See also the Additional note: A. Erhart.]

the past tense. Similarly, an action seen in its cursive development is usually non-accomplished as such, it goes on in the present and may be expected to continue in the future. Thus, the imperfect became the form used to express the future tense.⁶

5. MOOD

From the viewpoint of morphology, a differentiation of moods may be observed only in verbal forms with prefixed elements for person and gender, that is, in the imperfect.

The imperative mood is indeed clearly marked in the absence of such personal prefixes--virtually all Semitic imperatives are second person--while the verbal endings correspond to those of the jussive.

Whether or not Semitic jussive forms were different in origin from those of the indicative imperfect is a question beyond the scope of this discussion. At any rate, from a synchronistic viewpoint the jussive is closely related to the imperfect. In the consonantal orthography of Phoenician the jussive cannot be distinguished from the indicative imperfect; only forms preceded by the dynamic particle of negation 'l can be unquestionably identified as jussives. In Syriac the jussive was not preserved, having been replaced by the imperfect.

It is probable that some forms in Phoenician express a *modus energicus*, e.g. 'pqn 'may I get' in a papyrus from Saqqara, 5th cent. B.C. (KAI 50:2), yš'n 'they may bring' in late inscriptions from Athens (KAI 60:6), and apparently also yqšn '(lest) they cut off' from the sarcophagus of king 'Eshmun'azor of Sidon (KAI 13:22).

All of these moods correspond well to the general definition of this category as the expression of different approaches to reality.

6. PERSON, NUMBER, GENDER

By definition, finite verbal forms are those which express person and number. Masculine and feminine gender is differentiated only in the second and third persons, singular and plural. Original finite forms of the first person, both singular and plural, are common to both genders.

In so far as the secondary periphrastic present of Syriac may be considered a finite verbal form--it actually does express person and number--gender is also differentiated here in the first person since the formation includes a participle which agrees with the subject in gender. Pronouns of the first person do not indicate gender.

⁶The three hypothetical stages may be summarized as follows:

	PERFECT	IMPERFECT
STAGE I		
subjective aspect	independent or constative	dependent/circumstantial or cursive
STAGE II		
objectivized expression of action	perfective accomplished	imperfective non-accomplished
STAGE III		
tense	past	non-past (present and future)

Certain forms of imperfect are identical, including the 2. m. sing. and 3. f. sing. in the older Northwest Semitic languages, and the 3. m. sing. and 1. plur. in Syriac. The functions of these forms were so different that no necessity was felt to distinguish them morphologically.

On the other hand, the loss of final vowels in nearly all forms of the perfect and imperative in Syriac resulted in the coalescence of several forms in the spoken language, e.g. the 3. m. sing. and the 3. plur. of both genders. To avoid confusion secondary affixes were added to some forms of the perfect and imperative. In written texts various graphical devices were introduced, such as the use of *-y* as a kind of marker of the feminine, and two points above one of the letters to denote a feminine plural form.

7. NOMINAL FORMS

In dealing with Phoenician consonantal texts it is necessary to take cognizance of two forms of infinitive, commonly called absolute and construct. Only one such form, corresponding to the infinitive construct, is attested in Syriac.

Participles can be developed from all of the verbal patterns, and the function of each form is in accord with the function of the pattern both as to manner of action and voice (active, reflexive or passive), with the exception of passive participles, those of the type called "internal passive," or those differentiated from active participles of the same pattern by changes of vowels between the radicals (cf. above, 3.2.2.).

The Phoenician /ū/ and Syriac /ī/ in passive participles of the simple pattern require no further explanation. The /a/ of the Syriac passive participle stands in opposition to its active counterpart /e/ (< *i) since the difference between *u and *i must not have been adequate⁷ for so fundamental a distinction.⁸

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⁷Cf. Kurylowicz 1961:26. He himself explains the passive participles by the mediopassive **yuqattalu* etc., 34.

⁸The author expresses his gratitude to Mr. Paul W. Gaebelein for his kind help in improving the English style and the presentation in general.

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ADDITIONAL NOTE (December 1974)

- Erhart, A. 1973. "Pluralformen und Pluralität," *ArOr* 41.243-255. [The opposition of perfective and imperfective verbal aspects is expressed in terms compact and diffuse, used for phonological oppositions by R. Jakobson and M. Halle.]
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1. Carleton T. Hodge (University of Indiana), *The Nominal Sentence in Semitic* (=AAL²/4).
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4. Russell G. Schuh (UCLA), *The Chadic Verbal System and its Afroasiatic Nature* (forthcoming in *AAL*).
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B. Ancient Semitic Languages

6. Giorgio Buccellati (UCLA), *On the Akkadian "Attributive" Genitive* (forthcoming in *AAL*).
7. Daniel Ronnie Cohen (Columbia University), *Subject and Object in Biblical Aramaic: A Functional Approach Based on Form-Content Analysis* (=AAL²/1).
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10. Charles Krahmalkov (University of Michigan), *On the Noun with Heavy Suffixes in Punic*.

C. Hebrew

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12. Allan D. Corré (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee), *"Wāw" and "Digamma"* (forthcoming in *AAL*).
13. Harvey Minkoff (Hunter College, N.Y.), *A Feature Analysis of the Development of Hebrew Cursive Scripts* (=AAL¹/7).
14. Raphael Nir (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), *The Survival of Obsolete Hebrew Words in Idiomatic Expressions* (=AAL²/3).
15. Talmy Givón (UCLA), *On the Role of Perceptual Clues in Hebrew Relativization* (=AAL²/8).
16. Alan C. Harris (UCLA), *The Relativization "which that is" in Israeli Hebrew*.

D. Arabic

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21. Robert Hetzron (University of California, Santa Barbara), *The t-Converb in Western Gurage and the Role of Analogy in Historical Morphology* (=AAL²/2).

F. Beyond Afroasiatic

22. Gilbert B. Davidowitz (New York), *Cognate Afroasiatic and Indo-European Affixes: Conjugational Person-Markers*.